

The Army has a growing training land shortfall that will reach 5 million acres across the entire country by 2011. Fort Carson is not the only base with projected training land shortfalls, but not all bases have an opportunity to expand to remedy to the problem. The Army has the ability to address some of the overall training land shortfall by acquiring land at PCMS. If the Army is legislatively prevented from expanding PCMS, it will harm the Army's ability to provide necessary and realistic training to units stationed at Fort Carson, as well as Active, Reserve, and Guard units training there.

The Army firmly opposes legislation to limit the Army's proposed expansion of PCMS. Indeed, the Army may need to expand other installations around the country, and such legislation could create a dangerous precedent that the Army will forever be locked into its current training and maneuver space footprint regardless of any future changes to organization, technology, doctrine, or threats.

Thank you for your consideration of the Army's views as you complete your work on S. 1645.

Sincerely,

PETE GEREN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PRYOR). The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. SALAZAR. What is the pending business and the amount of time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is still in a period of morning business, and the majority controls 5 minutes.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for up to 2 minutes of that time, followed by Senator BROWN for the remainder.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I want to make sure we don't have Republican colleagues who have a need to speak further in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican side has 40 seconds remaining in their allotted time.

Mr. ALLARD. Very good. I have no objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Colorado for his views on this amendment. I also thank him for the work we do together in support of our military installations which we consider to be part of the crown jewel of the Nation's defense and homeland security, and we often work on those matters together.

I will take exception with respect to a characterization concerning my amendment in that there is some inconsistency between what we did in the 2005 BRAC recommendations, which we all supported, and this particular amendment.

The fact is, the BRAC, in its findings, said we would move the additional brigades into Fort Carson, that there was sufficient capacity to provide all the training that was required there at Fort Carson, and that is because Fort Carson has over 100,000 acres on its own site and 235,000 acres of additional land. Now the Army wants to acquire land that is going to make the Army's hold-

ings at Piñon Canyon greater than the size of the entire State of Rhode Island. My question is, What has changed from January of 2005 until today? What has changed is that all of a sudden the Army has decided that it needs all this additional land.

I go back to my initial argument, which is, if we care about private property rights, if we care about the ranchers in southeast Colorado, if we care about national security and making sure we are investing taxpayer dollars wisely, then it is important we do a timeout, which is all that my amendment does.

I urge my Republican and Democratic colleagues to support my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

VA OUTSOURCING

Mr. BROWN. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, the amendment I will be calling up later this morning does not change current law. It simply reminds the Veterans' Administration to abide by current law. All Federal agencies are bound by certain rules when they outsource jobs. While the Department of Defense has its own set of rules, every other Federal agency, including the Veterans' Administration, is required to take the same straightforward steps to ensure that when outsourcing occurs, which sometimes it needs to, it actually improves upon the status quo, not outsourcing for the sake of outsourcing or to feed private contractors but outsourcing to serve taxpayers and, in the case of the VA, veterans better. If any Federal agency should be required to show a good reason before displacing Government workers, it should be the Veterans' Administration. That is because so many VA employees are actually veterans themselves. Arbitrarily firing veterans is not only wrong, it is shortsighted. The obstacles to employment are steep enough for veterans in too many cases without throwing unjustifiable outsourcing into the mix.

Even if we put that aside, taxpayers are not well served when Government contracts are handed out without regard to the costs or benefits that result. That is one of the many lessons we should have learned from Katrina. It is a lesson we are learning over and over from Iraq. These lessons don't seem to be sinking in with the administration. The VA is firing many of its blue-collar workers and replacing them with private contractors without going through the competition process that Congress has called for again and again. It is bad enough that the VA is moving forward without actually figuring out what is in the best interest of taxpayers. Sometimes outsourcing jobs makes sense. More often than not, as we have found, it doesn't. But that question should be asked before any outsourcing is done in every single case.

Making matters worse, four-fifths of the blue-collar jobs targeted for outsourcing were held by veterans. So the Veterans' Administration is outsourcing Government jobs held by veterans to go to private contractors without proving that it is actually saving money. This is more than a paycheck or a path to independence. Sidestepping the rules to eliminate their jobs is bad business and bad policy.

I urge my colleagues to support the amendment.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2642, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2642) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

AMENDMENT NO. 2687

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I rise to express my strong opposition to the Coleman amendment No. 2687. The amendment requires the use of emergency Federal funds paid by taxpayers from every State for security at the 2008 Presidential political party conventions in Minneapolis and Denver. If the amendment passes, both the Republican and Democratic political party conventions will each receive \$50 million additional in Federal taxpayer dollars for State and local law enforcement costs associated with hosting the conventions. The \$50 million for the Minneapolis convention is on top of the \$12.5 million in Federal funds the State also will receive in the current version of the Commerce-Justice-State appropriations bill. This is all on top of \$70 million each party receives to host their conventions and run their political campaigns.

Spending an additional \$100 million in taxpayer funds for political conventions in Minneapolis and Denver is pretty outrageous to me. States that bid to host political conventions know that winning the bid also means a high cost for security comes with it. Sure, the cost of security after September 11 has gone up, but States and cities that bid on the 2008 conventions knew that burden at the get-go.

Plus, the States will receive an enormous benefit from hosting the conventions. I have not heard one person say that the States or cities hosting the